



U.S. Department of Justice

**Ronald C. Machen Jr.**  
*United States Attorney for the  
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center  
555 Fourth St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530*

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, July 22, 2011

### **For Information Contact:**

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### **Father Pleads Guilty to Involuntary Manslaughter In Death of His Seven-Week-Old Son - Defendant Gave Misleading Information to Medical Personnel -**

WASHINGTON - Hiawatha Henry, 19, of Washington, D.C., pled guilty today to one count of involuntary manslaughter in the death of his infant son, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced.

Henry pled guilty in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. The Honorable Gerald I. Fisher scheduled sentencing for September 23, 2011. Henry faces a maximum statutory sentence of 30 years in prison.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Cynthia Wright proffered that on or about August 28, 2009, Henry was caring for his twin seven-week-old sons at the family's residence in the 1800 block of Bryant Street NE. He was the sole provider caring for his sons while the infants' mother was out of the home. Henry was playing a video game and became frustrated when one of the twins, Hiawatha Jackson, began crying.

Henry recklessly and carelessly picked up the crying infant, and sat on a broken futon. He carelessly held and dropped the baby, causing the child's head to strike a metal futon frame. Then he ignored the baby's crying and neglected to seek immediate medical attention. Rather, the defendant left the twins and went downstairs to get water.

Later, Henry saw that little Hiawatha was having trouble breathing, and he summoned his aunt, who called 911. The infant was taken to Children's National Medical Center about 3:45 p.m. Henry misled medical personnel and did not inform them that he had dropped the infant.

Instead, the defendant told medical personnel that the baby had choked and vomited during his feeding. Based on these misleading representations, medical personnel examined and released the infant.

After returning home, the child was crying and coughing throughout the evening and into the next day. Only when the baby became unresponsive to touch, had labored breathing, and discoloration, did Henry finally call 911.

At approximately 1 p.m. on August 29, the infant was taken back to Children's National Medical Center and placed on life support. According to medical personnel from Children's National Medical Center, he was diagnosed with cerebral edema, subarachnoid hemorrhage, and bilateral retinal hemorrhages. The injuries are inconsistent with the events as initially described by the defendant. Medical personnel concluded that the injuries were non-accidental.

On August 31, 2009, at approximately 11:35 a.m., Hiawatha Jackson was removed from life support and was pronounced dead. An autopsy later determined that the cause of death was abusive head injuries with brain contusions and the manner of death was ruled a homicide.

In announcing the plea, U.S. Attorney Machen praised the work of Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Homicide Detectives Carlos Hilliard and Gina Powell, and Mobile Crime Technician Leother Strong. He also cited the work of Paralegal Specialists Phaylyn Hunt and Delissa Rivers; Summer Intern Chris Young, and Victim Witness Advocate Marcey Rinker. Finally, he commended Assistant U.S. Attorney Cynthia Wright, who prosecuted the case.

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